

decided, once and for all, on whether abortion is essential from a medical standpoint, you will get nowhere. After that decision you must decide what kind of laws can protect the decent citizen and the decent practitioner. The problem we are after from the national standpoint, is criminal abortion."

But this challenge can only be met by co-operation between all the technical experts and an informed public opinion. The final resolutions of the conference show a full awareness of the need for more facts and more public discussion of the abortion problem. The publishing of this book will certainly forward both these aims and should stimulate thought and discussion in this country as well as in America.

RACHEL CONRAD.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Desai, Sapur Faredun. *A Community at the Cross-road.* Bombay, 1948. New Book Co. Pp. 201. Price Rs.10.

THIS book is about the Parsis of India, of whom in 1941 there were 114,890 according to census figures quoted by the author. Fewer, that is, than the population of Brighton. They came as a refugee people from Persia "more than a thousand years ago" and settled in India, particularly in Bombay, where they are many and active still. Of the Parsi, Desai says: "Numerically he is the tiniest, yet highly intelligent minority not only in India but in the whole world. Socio-biologically this community is a wonder" because it has been able to "remain intact after a lapse of some 30-40 generations in contact with an equally great civilization if not greater."

At the root of the life of the community is its religion, Zoroastrianism, with its three great principles of Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds; Robert Ballou has pointed out* that this might have become the religion of Europe if the advance of the Persian Empire had not been halted at Marathon and Salamis.

* Ballou, Robert O. (Ed.). *Pocket World Bible.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Desai gives the historical and religious background and speaks of the need to preserve "The Heritage that is Parsi" from the disintegrative influence of the present day.

His study however is mainly socio-biological. He writes vividly and with enthusiasm; he gives a wealth of quotations and figures from his wide reading in support of his theme. (There are 58 statistical tables and 8 figures, including a "logistic curve of Parsi population" which is shown as frontispiece.) He casts his net in all directions and gathers in fish and fowl and—it must be admitted—a number of red herrings. For some of his figures are as he says himself "in no way reliable"; some of his theories based upon calculations which "may not be true." Yet he deserves credit for his frankness in these statements, and he has given much material for thought and much that is picturesque and striking.

The dynamics of population are discussed, and that decline in fertility which is one of the main points of concern. In relation thereto the author considers the structure of Parsi society; the marriage age; the pressure of poor housing, malnutrition, disease and poverty upon a large proportion of the people. He stresses the need for the help and effort of responsible Parsis, for the good of the whole. Eugenic measures to meet the situation are proposed in Chapter VIII. Here he suggests that "intelligent persons . . . must undertake parenthood responsibility personally . . . measures . . . must be undertaken to ensure a happy married life to the fit and able population . . . there should be . . . no bar . . . in the way of the marriage and procreation of the intellectuals, and society should try to avoid bad blood (by segregation of defectives . . . sterilization . . . education)." "A Family Relations Institute is a necessity." "To have talent uniformly distributed . . . assortative or selective mating should be discouraged." There should be "help for eugenical marriage" and "restriction of unwanted children." General social improvements are also suggested. An appendix gives "A schedule for the study of fertility

trend of the Parsis." There are references and an index.

Sir Homi Mody, K.B.E., in a foreword says: "A scientific study, such as Mr. Desai has made, stands in a category of its own and reflects great credit on the author." Professor Jehangir J. Asana writes in the introduction that "This unpretentious thought-provoking book is perhaps the first serious scientifically envisaged endeavour" to collect data to expose and explain "most of our difficulties and problems."

As for Mr. Desai, he says in his preface that his efforts will have been rewarded if his book "acts as an eye-opener to the Parsi community or as a filip to any other community similarly circumstanced."

To these comments we may add that *A Community at the Cross-road* will interest those in this country who care for what is written about eugenics, or for the future of Parsi ways of life and thought. I. W.

Hoebel, E. Adamson. *Man in the Primitive World: An Introduction to Anthropology.* McGraw-Hill Series in Sociology and Anthropology. New York and London, 1949. McGraw-Hill. Pp. xii + 543. Price 30s.

LIKE others in the McGraw-Hill series in Sociology and Anthropology, this book is a superb example of the printer's and publisher's arts, marked by large clear script, wide margins, strong battens and obedient pages. It is an introduction to anthropology "for the student, fellow worker in other sciences, and the lay reader who desires an orientation in the science of anthropology." It has the hall-mark of the well-planned textbook—definitions and technical terms are in italics, each topic discussed in a chapter is announced in heavy type, detailed references are given, there is an extensive bibliography, an adequate index, and a very full glossary (from G—String to God, High). The only complaint I have about the layout is that the photographs are dull, being of models (and artefacts) in various museums.

The matter is divided into four main parts:

on Ancient Man and Prehistoric Culture, Race and Culture, Primitive Society (the largest) and Society and Culture. Hoebel's main interest is in the archæological record of man's history in its general cultural implications. His discussion of race (and race relations) is sane: concluding that there is a possibility of innate psychological and physiological differences between racial groups; that such differences have never been unequivocally established; and that such differences as are indicated have little bearing on behaviour. One interesting (minor) suggestion he makes, concerning anthropologists' possible contributions to harmonious race relations (and clarity of thought), is that they should change such terms as, for example, "blood relationship" and "consanguine" to "genetic relationship" and "genetic group." Surprisingly, there is no reference to Shapiro's study of changes in anatomical proportions among Japanese immigrants in Hawaii.

The part devoted to primitive society is subdivided into several series of chapters on subsistence and crafts, property, status and social rôle, etc. As the book covers such a wide field, it is to be expected that the various chapters are not of equal quality. The realm of the supernatural, for example, defined as "the complex of man's interrelations with imagined powers that he believes transcend the mechanical laws of nature," is rather meagrely treated. Kinship, on the other hand, receives lengthy and detailed consideration.

Probably the best section is that on social control. As we would expect from Professor Hoebel, the discussion of law is most acute. (It may be noted that most of the references here are not to other anthropologists' pronouncements on the subject but to the writings of some notable jurists.) The *sine qua non* of law is the legitimate use of physical coercion. Legitimate coercion has to be generally acceptable to society, and its use is delegated to some officially privileged party (in primitive society sometimes to one person—"In any primitive society the so-called 'private prosecutor' in a private injury is implicitly a public official, *pro*